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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Letter dated 16 July 1997 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to the Officer-in-Charge, High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights

The Israeli military occupation has subjected the city of Hebron to imposing collective punishment on its inhabitants by tightening the military blockade on it, and by committing acts of killing and wounding Palestinian citizens there, for more than four weeks. The number of killed and wounded persons during this period has reached more than 300 Palestinian civilians, including children.

Israel is committing once again crimes of deliberate killing by depriving Palestinian persons of the right to life, and by inflicting grave bodily harm on defenceless Palestinians, in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian

Persons in Time of War of 1949, the principles of public international law, and particularly the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces provided protection for the Israeli settlers who attached a poster (a copy of which is herewith enclosed) 1/ on 28 June 1997 on the walls of the city of Hebron, an offence to Islam and to all Muslims, together with their Prophet (God's blessing and peace be upon him), whom they portrayed as a pig setting its foot on the Koran.

On 6 July 1997, the Israeli occupation forces stormed into the Yaakobia Girls School in Hebron, where they tore the Holy Koran to pieces and threw it on the ground, a new offence against the Holy Koran and Muslims together. This reminds us of a similar crime, reported on 29 May 1989 by the French News Agency as well as Reuters, which stated that some Israeli forces occupied the school at Dir Al-Balout in the West Bank, where they tore the Holy Koran to pieces and used it as "toilet paper", offending once again the spiritual values of Islam and insulting the feelings of Muslims and their holy places.

The above-mentioned events take place in the context of the massacres committed previously in the holy places, in addition to acts of killing there, committed when the Israeli occupation soldiers opened fire on Palestinian worshippers in Al Aqsa Mosque, in occupied East Jerusalem, on 15 January 1988, killing and wounding tens of Palestinians at prayers. Then, on 8 October 1990, the Israeli occupation authorities stormed once again into the Al Aqsa Mosque, and opened fire with their machine guns on the worshippers, killing 32 of them and wounding hundreds of others. Afterwards, on 25 February 1994, an Israeli soldier opened fire with his machine gun inside the Ibrahimi shrine in Hebron, killing 30 Palestinian worshippers and wounding 150 others.

These persisting crimes against the Palestinians and the Islamic holy places not only violate the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981, but they are also crimes which raise sectarian conflicts, kindle hatred between religions, and take the world back to the era of hatred, the jungle, and intolerance based on religion and belief.

On the other hand, the Israeli occupation authorities are still expropriating Palestinian lands, establishing settlements thereon, and expanding these settlements not only on Jabal Abu Ghneim in occupied East Jerusalem, but also in all the different regions of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel.

1/ Available for consultation in the Secretariat.

The United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, affirmed in his report (S/1997/494), of 26 June 1997, paragraphs 17 and 18, the continuation of settlement activities, including establishing new settlements, expanding the already established ones, and building roads as well as other bypass sites bordering the settlements or in between.

In fact, activities of expanding settlements have been recorded in more than 30 regions in the already established settlements. Moreover, the report emphasized the continuation of the expropriation of Palestinian land, with the aim of expanding Israeli settlements thereon. It also emphasized, in paragraph 21, the continued refusal of Israel to legally apply the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

Furthermore, the report of the Secretary-General stressed, in paragraph 23, the persistent violation of the Israeli occupation authorities of the principles of international law, concerning administrative detention of Palestinians and the ill-treatment and torture to which Palestinians are subjected, in accordance with an official decision made by the High Court and the Government of Israel, in addition to imposing collective punishments on Palestinians, among which is the demolition of houses in Jerusalem and in other regions of the occupied territory.

Therefore, these acts confirm the determination of the Government of Israel to continue its course of demolishing the peace process by persisting in its occupation of the Palestinian territory and preventing the Palestinian people from exercising their national rights, which have been defined and confirmed by the United Nations.

We kindly request you to distribute this memorandum, and its enclosure, 1/ as an official document of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities at its upcoming session, and to the members of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer